**Being an immigrant and missionary, serving cross-culturally**

*Martin Schaser*

Handout

**Historical Background (keeping the culture from home country) - 10 Min**

The political as well as the economic situation in Eastern Europe prompted many people to leave their countries (legal or illegal, before and after the revolution from 1989) seeking a better life in the USA, Australia or Western Europe.

The cultural shock and stress as well as the new language made the life of the immigrants hard in the beginning. Ethnical Christians gathered in groups for prayer and mutual support. This way small churches started having their personal needs as a focus. As a Christian immigrant you will carry with you cultural "baggage" and you will not always have the “Mind of Christ” or “the vision of the Kingdom” as your first priority. For many of them the cultural rules are more important than the Scripture and they will fight to keep as much as possible of their church culture and style of worship as it was in their home country. They also expect the same from their leaders.

**The Reality of the Diaspora - 15 Min**

Spiritual needs, a lack of vision, resistance to changes, a new language, the neglected new generation, and many other factors led to internal crisis in these churches. Many young people distanced themselves from the Lord and a few left the ethnical church and joined international churches.

The lack of initiative of the Christian Movements in the new country, a lack of vision in the mother church from the home country, a lack of strategies to connect different ethnical churches for the sake of the Kingdom or maybe also indifference, keep churches isolated from each other.

**A new Perspective - 15 Min**

Having this perception and seeing this reality (my reality), moved me to act. Prayer and personal time with God, bible study on Mission, looking for a godly perspective for the existence of the church and more, helped me to develop a vision for a missional agency for planting international churches in larger cities in Austria and beyond.

1999 I started an ethnical Romanian church (Salem Church of God) in upper Austria in the City Perg, and we functioned this way for 13 years. Three years ago we opened the first International church (Salem International Church) with a “Romanian foundation” in Linz, Austria. We connected inter-denominationally, became a partner of the Austrian Evangelical Alliance and are now working together with Austrian churches for the extension of God´s Kingdom. We started a ministry among Muslim immigrants with the Goal of winning Muslims for Christ and eventually plant a church with Christians that have a Muslim background, in order to be better equipped to reach out to the Muslim nations in Upper Austria and beyond.

We plan to start (plant) three more international churches until 2020 in different cities in Austria.